

THE MENTOR

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By GUSTAV KOBBE

Author and Critic

THE word cherub as used in defining the angelic order to which the term is strictly applied has a limited meaning. But on the very human principle that all beautiful children are angels—until it is discovered that they are not—the meaning of the word has been extended. In consequence, it embraces not only baby angels, but even those chubby little rascals known as cupids, who dart about with bows and arrows and use the susceptible human heart for a target. That is why pictures illustrating the cherub in art may be of such wide range, and include works like the two famous cherubs of Raphael, the cherub of Sassoferrato, the young angel playing on a lute by Fra Bartolommeo, Reynolds' angel heads, Boucher's "Cible d'Amour" (Cupid's Target), and even Rubens' "Holy Cherubs," a group in which, strictly speaking, there is no cherub at all.

The most famous cherubs ever painted are those of Raphael. When "Raphael's Madonna" is spoken of only one of his many Madonnas is



REPOSE IN EGYPT

From a painting by Van Dyck in the Pitti Gallery, Florence.

meant,—the “Sistine Madonna” in the Dresden gallery. Other Madonnas by him also are famous; but this so far outdoes them all in fame that it is known simply as his Madonna.

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS PICTURE

There can be but little doubt that the “Sistine Madonna” is the most famous picture in the world. It is enormously popular throughout the Christian world, and likely represents to the majority of people not a great work of art nor even a great Madonna, but rather a pictorial interpretation of sacred motherhood. In Dresden it is in a gallery by itself, as in a shrine; and the copying of it is now forbidden. Of course there already exist numerous reproductions of it, and in the Dresden shops it appears in all kinds of souvenirs. Dresden may be said to be under the spell of the “Sistine Madonna.”

Quite as famous as Raphael's Madonna are Raphael's Cherubs, which are a detail taken from this Madonna; and, as the "Sistine Madonna" is the most widely known picture of the Virgin, so no cherub or group of cherubs is so famous as the two that lean on the altar top indicated at the very bottom of the picture. These cherubs, however, are not just pretty cherubs; they have both artistic and allegorical meaning in the composition. If you examine a reproduction of the entire picture, you will discover one reason for its being a great work of art, and also why, in spite of Raphael's having been temporarily obscured of late years by artists of more vigorous and realistic tendencies, he is rapidly regaining his former importance.

The composition of this picture is not only in three planes of perspective, but also in three planes of elevation. Of the large figures the one farthest in perspective but also the most elevated, and therefore the most conspicuous, is the Madonna with the Child. These are the most sacred personalities in the painting. Hence they rise conspicuously above the others. The figures of Saint Barbara and Saint Sixtus are lower in elevation and nearer in perspective. The cherubs are at the bottom and very front of the picture. Despite their wings, they are intensely human little creatures, and may be said to represent humanity. Thus, on Raphael's canvas we have in gradually deepening perspective, but at the same time in rising elevation, the world, as represented by the two little human cherubs; the church, as represented by two of its saints; and the Godhead, as represented by the Son in the arms of His mother. If the interpretation I have essayed is correct, these two cherubs in art play a larger part in the allegory of the painting than is usually assigned to them.

One senses rather than actually sees the depth and elevation in this picture; for its three horizons are viewed in one. Raphael further enhanced the feeling of depth in the work by painting a frame within the frame, the painted frame being



ANGEL

A detail from a painting in the Vatican, by Raphael.



ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

From painting by Rubens, in the Hof Museum, Vienna.

formed by the altar top below, on which the cherubs lean, the curtain rod above, and the curtains on the sides. First one looks into a scene; and then deeper and deeper into it, while at the same time the eye travels upward from cherubs to saints, from saints to Madonna. It may be, as some people think, that the two charming infants with wings were afterthoughts. Even so, however, they are not superfluous, but, exquisite in themselves, add to the harmonious beauty of the composition.

FRA BARTOLOMMEO'S ANGEL

Fra Bartolommeo painted in 1509 the young angel seated at the foot of a pedestal and playing a lute. Although more than four hundred years have elapsed since it left the hands of the master who produced it, it is still to be seen in the very spot where it was placed so long ago. The same contemporary authority to whom we owe the reference to the "Sistine Madonna" has left information

regarding this picture by Fra Bartolommeo. "For the church of San Martino, in Lucca," writes Vasari, "this master painted a picture of the Madonna with an angel playing on a lute at her feet; San Stefano (Saint Stephen) stands on one side of the Virgin, and San Giovanni (Saint John) on the other; the work is a good one, whether as regards design or coloring, and affords full proof of the master's ability." From the point of view of the present, the calm, reserved contemporary praise bestowed upon pictures now considered among the great masterpieces of the world is both interesting and amusing.

In this picture are two other angels that cannot, like the angel of the lute, be detached from the composition and reproduced separately, yet are wonderfully graceful. They are lightly poised over the Virgin, and hold above her head a jeweled crown from which floats a saffron-colored veil in two streamers that add to the airiness of the design. The delicate color of their wings is seen against the lighter tones of the sky. The Ma-

donna, holding the Child in her lap, is on the pedestal at the foot of which sits the angel with the lute, clad in diaphanous drapery and with wings outspread, while he plays upon the instrument and sings. The vigorously modeled figures of the saints stand like two pillars holding the composition together. This picture, now priceless, was, according to an inventory of the time, valued at sixty ducats (about \$150).

Shortly before painting this picture Fra Bartolommeo had been drawn to Rome to see the work of the famous Raphael. It so filled him with admiration that he despaired of equaling it; and in consequence he cut short his stay, even leaving a picture he had begun for Raphael to finish. These facts are interesting, because there is what might be called a family resemblance between this angel with the lute of Fra Bartolommeo and the Raphael cherubs.

Gruyer, a French writer, speaks of the singular charm that Fra Bartolommeo understood how to impart to his pictures, by the angels with variegated wings which he frequently introduced, now flying lightly through the air and again seated tranquilly, playing on the mandolin or lute or lifting their voices in song. This passage, while general in its application to Fra Bartolommeo's work, fits almost exactly the angels in the Madonna from which is taken the delightful angel with the lute.

THE FLYING CHERUB OF SASSOFERRATO

The Cherub of Sassoferrato, the beautiful little angel flying gently and slowly as if about to alight, was kidnapped in 1901; for in that year the picture of which this plump morsel of winged babyhood is a part was stolen from the church of Santa Sabina in Rome. Fortunately it was recovered. The painting is "The



ASSUMPTION OF THE VIRGIN

From painting by Titian, in the Academy, Venice.

Madonna of the Rosary," and was executed as an altar piece for the church. It is considered Sassoferrato's masterpiece. The Virgin holds the child in her lap; to the right of the chair or throne kneels Saint Dominic, to the left Saint Catharine. The cherub with folded arms that, well up in the picture, floats so gently toward the Madonna is balanced by another on the other side of the throne. This latter cherub's little hands are folded and raised in prayer. And there are still other cherubs' heads with wings arranged in a semicircle. This picture shows the care and finish that distinguished Sassoferrato's work, and his smoothness and beauty of expression; yet it avoids the exaggerated sweetness that in some of his work becomes insipid. The Cherub of Sassoferrato is distinctly lovely.

A GROUP OF RUBENS' CHERUBS

Rubens' "Holy Cherubs," to give the picture its usual English title, is a misnomer, unless we stretch the meaning of cherub to embrace not only the saints but even the Christ Child. The picture contains the infant Jesus, the infant Saint John, an angel, and a little girl. The popular title wholly ignores its religious significance and simply regards it as an attractive picture of children, one of the children, for reasons the average picture gazer is too indolent to trouble about, having wings. Even the title, "The Little Jesus, Saint John, and Two Angels" sometimes given to it—and in works on Rubens—is incorrect. There is only one angel,—the boy with wings. The little girl is not an angel, for the simple reason that in the angelic orders there are neither girl nor woman angels, strange as that phase of what is called angelology may seem to us of the modern world, in which woman plays so conspicuous and helpful a part.

A description of the picture will explain its significance. The Christ Child, shown in profile, is sitting on a cushion under a tree. With His right hand He is reaching out and patting the infant Saint John on the cheek. The baby saint, his back turned toward the spectator, is engaged in lively conversation with the Christ Child, and the gesture of his right hand, with the index finger extended, appears to give emphasis to what he is saying. With the other arm he fondles the lamb that a little angel is bringing up from the left. Behind the Christ Child kneels a little girl. In the right hand she holds a bunch of grapes, and with the left is reaching toward a vine with the object, doubtless, of plucking another bunch. In the right foreground are fruits; on the treetrunk is a climbing grapevine; there is a woody landscape. Thus we have in this picture the Christ Child, Saint John, the Lamb, an angel, and the Church or Holy Bride (represented by the little girl), a group the significance of which makes the title of "Holy



VISION OF EZEKIEL

From a painting by Raphael in the Pitti Gallery, Florence. It shows cherubs in a composition of extraordinary vigor.



WATER



AIR

Reproduced from a set of four paintings by Francesco Albani (1578-1660), representing the elements.

Cherubs" seem a far-fetched piece of sentimentality. With all it is a group of plump, healthy children with a lamb, and would readily pass as a secular canvas, were it not for the little angel.

The original of this picture is in Vienna. What is believed to be an atelier, or studio, copy of it is in Berlin. This is an example of the custom that prevailed with many old masters, of having much of their work executed by their young pupils, the master himself putting in the finishing touches. In Rubens' case, the farther away his customer lived the more work on the picture ordered by that customer was done by the pupils in Rubens' atelier. He had many of these. According to an eye-witness, they were usually to be found busily employed on various canvases on which the master had drawn in the subject with chalk and here and there indicated the color scheme that the pupils were to carry out. This done, Rubens went over the picture himself. The custom I have described accounts for the great number of pictures turned out by some of the old masters, and also for their uneven quality, since, not infrequently, the final touches of the master were insufficient to cover up the weaker work of the pupils.

CUPIDS IN AIRY PLAY

The French title of Boucher's "Target," "La Cible d'Amour," well expresses the scene. The little rogues of cupids are romping in air, wee aviators of two hundred years ago, created by the fancy of the French artist. The target of the cupids is a heart. They are keeping up their



FIRE



EARTH

Francesco Albani achieved great fame by his frescoes. His painting of cherubs and cupids is distinguished for its exquisite finish and natural charm.

marksmanship between campaigns. They are the bowmen of Venus, the archers of Love, and must not permit their skill to lapse for lack of adventure. This flight of cupids is a true flight of fancy.

Boucher was eminently a decorative painter. As was the case with Watteau and Fragonard, his popularity was for awhile obscured, because other styles of decoration succeeded the manner of their period. Now, however, there has been a revival of French eighteenth century decoration, and with it an appreciation of the harmonious blending of these pictures in the decorative scheme of that period, which is now frequently reproduced in so-called "period rooms" in private houses.

Boucher was a child of his day. His subjects are mostly of the so-called "galant" type,—shepherds and shepherdesses that look like disguised lords and ladies and are engaged in sentimental adventure, as it was understood at the time. He also painted Venuses and Dianas, and, as a portraitist, was a protégé of Mme. de Pompadour. Even the manner in which death came to him seemed to point a moral drawn from his own career as an artist. For one morning, in May, 1770, he was found dead before his easel, on which stood a picture of Venus.

But this artist's cupids are in a class by themselves. They are romping rogues, frolicsome creatures, happy at the mere thought of being alive and the wonder of it. The subtle delicacy of their rounded limbs, enchanting grace, their ease of gesture and charm of attitude, their cheerfulness and abandon, and, in general, their complete absorption in having

a good time,—these characteristics stamp them as Boucher's. And, above all, their airiness and grace! They are petals, carnations, whole festoons of blossoms, floating merrily through space.

REYNOLDS' WINGED HEADS

Reynolds' "Angel Heads" is a picture neither of angels, of cupids nor of any other imaginary beings. It represents five different views of the head of a child, whose name was Frances Isabella Ker Gordon, the "blue-eyed, golden-haired daughter of Lord William Gordon, her sweet face seen in five different winged heads amongst the clouds."

This is possibly the best known of all Reynolds' pictures of children. He painted the cluster of little cherubs in 1786, a date near the close of his great career; so that the different expressions of the same charming face would seem to reveal his knowledge, gained from his long experience as an artist, of the subtleties of the child mind as reflected in the child face. Here are innocence, reflection, wonder, joy, and affection, according as one chooses which of the five heads of little Miss Gordon to contemplate. It has been remarked of this picture, that it has been cheapened by frequent copies, in which the delicate essence of the original has been allowed to



THE GARLAND OF FRUIT

From a painting by Rubens. An interesting example of the great Flemish master's art in depicting the cherub type.



DANCE OF CUPIDS

From a painting by Francesco Albani (1578-1660).

evaporate. "But a glance at the picture itself renews the spell of the master." It is England's contribution to the cherub in art.

One authority says that the face is as nearly angelic as a human portrait can be made. Certainly the heads are angelic in respect to beauty, grace, and innocence. Lord Gordon paid Reynolds a hundred guineas (\$500) for the work, which would now bring many times that sum. The charming little girl whose head the picture shows in five different poses grew up but remained unmarried, and died in 1831. After her death her mother presented the picture to the National Gallery.

From all that has been written herein, it is quite evident that the cherub in art is a distinguished little being. For has he not engaged the services of some of the most famous masters of their time and country? Moreover, it is true that pictures of which they form a part are to be found in the great collections of the world,—Raphael's "Madonna" in the Dresden gallery; Rubens' "Holy Cherubs" in the Imperial Museum, Vienna; Boucher's "Target" in the Louvre; Reynolds' "Angel Heads" in the National Gallery; while the cherubs of Bartolommeo and Sassoferrato have made the churches in which they still hang, after the lapse of the centuries since they were painted, points of pilgrimage for lovers of the beautiful in art.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING



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CHERUBS FROM THE SISTINE MADONNA. BY RAPHAEL

CHERUBS IN ART

Cherubs from the Sistine Madonna, by Raphael

ONE

JUST a few miles south of Milan, and not far from the foot of the eastern slope of the Apennines, in the valley of the Po, lies the quaint old Italian city of Piacenza (pee-ah-chen'-za). Today few travelers stop there.

How different it would have been if Piacenza had not sold her birthright! For it was for the high altar of the Church of San

Sisto in this city that Raphael was commissioned to paint his best known picture. It is from this church that it takes its name—the Sistine Madonna. Here it remained for over two hundred years after it was painted.

About 1600 the period of decline set in and painting and the other arts languished. Italy became the hunting ground of the collectors of Europe. Through the agency of an artist of Bologna, Augustus III. of Saxony offered the sum of twenty thousand ducats for the picture—about forty-five thousand dollars. The picture became his property.

So if we wish to see this famous picture today we go not to ancient Piacenza, but to more modern Dresden—to the German city in the valley of the Elbe rather than to the Italian village on the Po. Because of the unrelenting efforts of the princes of Saxony to increase and better their collections, the gallery in Dresden is of great importance. But surpassing all others in importance in the estimation of visitors is the great Raphael painting, which occupies a room of its own. When the room is entered, voices sink to whispers; for it is the shrine of the Sistine Madonna.

It is a great picture; but so much has been said and written about it that many confess disappointment when they first

behold it. Perhaps they have expected too much. An American critic has pointed out what may be the reason for this.

We have seen that the picture was originally placed above the high altar of the church at Piacenza. There, as with most of the altarpieces in the Italian churches, it was covered by a curtain excepting during service.

But when the kneeling worshipers did raise their eyes to the picture, what did they behold? There behind the curtains, painted as though they had just been drawn back, descending upon clouds of glory, the Madonna with her divine Child. And the little cherubs, which are the subject of our detail of the picture, seemed to be leaning on the top of the altar, looking out upon them.

But at Dresden how changed it is! The Madonna does descend, but it is into a room filled not with the spirit of worship, but with a crowd of curious sightseers. Instead of looking at us from the top of the altar, the cherubs are looking over the bottom of the picture frame. Great as the picture undoubtedly is, it cannot be appreciated, nor can one realize the fullness of Raphael's intention, unless these details be remembered; for they must have been in his mind when he painted this glorious vision.



ANGEL. BY FRA BARTOLOMMEO

SEVERAL of the greatest of the Italian artists have been monks. This is not at all surprising, if one recalls the encouragement given to art by the patronage of the Church from the very first. Until after the middle of the fifteenth century, books were scarce. They were a luxury that the rich only could afford. But much

that nowadays would be taught by books was in those days taught the unlearned by means of the pictures with which the churches were freely decorated. The Church was not slow to grasp the value of this educational agency, and we should doubtless have much less of the work of Italian artists had they not been cared for by the churches for which they were painted. And therefore, when a gifted brother became associated with any of these monastic orders, it was usually impressed upon him that he would best serve the interests and increase the fame of his brotherhood by continuing in his vocation as artist.

The times in which Fra Bartolommeo lived were troublous ones. Born in 1475, he reached young manhood just in time to take sides in the conflict that raged about the great figure of Savonarola. Savonarola was one of the greatest leaders, preachers, patriots, that Florence has ever seen. Savonarola preached that there ought to be a purification of the life—moral as well as civic—of the citizens. He urged them to dress more soberly—to put aside their gewgaws—to simplify and deepen their life. He asked them to bring these things—anything that might interfere with the purity of their lives—to the great square, there to make a bonfire of these vanities. Swayed by the eloquence of the speaker, Fra Bartolommeo brought all his studies of the human body and some of his paintings of secular subjects. He

resolved to devote himself to painting religious subjects from that time forward.

But not all the artists were similarly affected by Savonarola's preaching. Indeed, close friends often disagreed about it. Albertinelli, Savonarola's artist friend, took the side of the enemies of Savonarola. The estrangement which this difference of opinion brought about seems not to have continued for very long.

The struggle in which Savonarola had engaged was not a passive one. It was a struggle of greed against patriotism—a struggle of the Medici (med'-dee-chee) and a pope who hoped to add Florence to his temporal dominions against a man whose desire it was to give his city better laws and higher principles of living. As often happens, wrong seems to triumph. Savonarola was strangled and his body burned.

Fra Bartolommeo did not desert the cause he had espoused. He took part in the defense of the monastery of Savonarola, San Marco, against the mob that stormed the place crying for the blood of Savonarola. But he did vow that were he delivered alive from that mob, he would enter a monastery. Thus in the course of time he donned the robe of a monk, thinking to give up his work as a painter. But, encouraged by the abbot, he was induced after an interval again to take up his brushes. During the remainder of his life he painted many pictures, some of which are considered among the treasures of the galleries of Europe.



CHERUB OF SASSOFERRATO

ONE needn't go far in the streets of sunny Italy to find a cherub. Perhaps that is the reason we find so many of them in the paintings of the Italian artists. Black-eyed, radiant, they look out from their pictures with the smile of children who have known no sorrow, and that is the way the children in the streets of

many of the Italian cities look today.

These child-cherubs should not be confused with the Biblical cherubim, although they are the outgrowth of the cherub idea. Strictly speaking, the seraphim and cherubim are the two orders of angels placed in pictures nearest the figure of the Deity. In the earlier Italian paintings they are seen merely as faces or heads surrounded with six wings, either red or blue in color. The wings of the seraphim are red, because the seraphim are the angels of love, and stand nearest the figure of God. The wings of the cherubim were blue, the cherubim being the angels of knowledge, and they are placed next the seraphim. But as early as the time of Fra Bartolommeo we find that there had crept in a perversion of this idea, and we find cherubs as little winged babies, used in the pictures of the Madonna to help out the composition.

The artist who painted the picture of which the cherub here shown formed a part is not one of the important figures of Italian art: he belongs rather to the period of the decadence. His real name was Giovanni Battista Salvi—translated, John the Baptist Salvi. He is more generally known as Il Sassoferrato. This name, as is very common among the Italians, is the name of the place in which he was born. Early in life he was sent to

Rome to complete his training in the profession in which he showed promise, and there he developed his talent for painting. He belonged to the Eclectic School—a group of artists working chiefly in Rome and Naples, who believed that Raphael and Michelangelo and Titian had reached the highest point of development to which art might aspire. They reasoned that since they might not hope to surpass these men, they might produce a fine picture by combining the peculiar excellencies of each of the three. They set as the goal of their desire the effort to unite Raphael's grace with Michelangelo's strength of drawing and Titian's beauty of color. Some of them did succeed in bringing forth very respectable pictures. But that which they failed to safeguard was the deadening effect of copying. For what they produced often so far concealed any characteristics of their own in the reaching after the characteristics of these mighty ones that their pictures remained but weak and empty imitations of the work of other and greater men.

To this school belonged Guido Reni (gee'-do ray'-nee), whose great picture of Aurora is in the Rospiigliosi (ros-peel-yo'-see) Palace at Rome. This is one of the pictures in which an artist of this school has come not far short of producing a remarkable picture.



HOLY CHERUBS. BY RUBENS

NOT cherubs, but children! Yes, that is what Rubens painted in this picture, children rather than cherubs. "And why not," he might be imagined as asking. "After all, is not childhood, in its purity, cherubic?"

And were one to judge by the beauty with which Rubens has invested this group of children, it would have to be admitted

that his position is not without something to be said for it.

Rubens' inheritance from generations of Flemish ancestors was a mind not wanting in imagination. But his imagination, to become satisfied, required a very definite, a very real, embodiment of its conception. In this charming party of children there is little of a spiritual nature. To be sure, one of them does show a wing; but they are healthy babies rather than ethereal beings. They behave like real children too. Doubtless Rubens has in this picture used his own children for models, or at least one of them. Throughout his life we find him using the members of his family in this way. We find both his wives again and again in his pictures—here as a Madonna, there as a Saint.

Notice too how quick Rubens has been to see the value of the garland of fruit in its positiveness of coloring as a contrast to the delicate flesh tones of the children. What a knot of glowing color the plump bodies make, and how it is relieved by the

fruit, the tree, the landscape, and the cushion at the right!

At the time he painted this picture Rubens' services were being sought by several of the royal courts of Europe. It is another sign of his greatness that he could see the beauty in such a domestic group as this when he was also painting the great historical canvases and his great religious pictures. There was, it is said, a waiting list of more than a hundred young men who wanted to study under his direction. And about this time Maria de' Medici of France opened negotiations with him for painting the series that so gloriously fills one of the galleries of the Louvre at Paris today. But these honors, which so quickly would have turned the head of a lesser man, did not cause Rubens to lose the power of finding beauty in the home life, as we find it in this picture.

"And does the Ambassador amuse himself with painting?" a Spanish courtier is said once to have asked Rubens. "No, Señor," was Rubens' reply, "the painter amuses himself by being ambassador."



ANGEL HEADS, BY REYNOLDS

CHERUBS IN ART *Angel Heads, by Sir Joshua Reynolds*

FIVE

THE English can hardly be called an art-producing nation. A former director of one of their largest museums has said that their greatest artists have come to them from without—Holbein, Vandyke, Rubens. And, with not more than a dozen exceptions, this is true. But one of the most important of these exceptions is

Sir Joshua Reynolds. And the appreciation of those who have not been able to see his work in England will be increased when they can study the portrait group of "Lady Betty Delmé and her Children," included among the pictures loaned to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York by the late J. Pierpont Morgan. It is one of his best pictures.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was born at a time when much that was very bad in French and Italian art was being greatly admired in England. Guido Reni, one of the worst of the Italian sentimentalists, and Domenichino, a painter with almost no strength of character; among the Frenchmen, Claude and Poussin, gifted, but cold and lifeless painters of landscape,—to such as these was the popular taste directed as being the best of their kind.

When twenty-six years old Reynolds went to Italy for three years of study. Instinctively he seems to have turned to the greater artists. Their influence in his later work is very plain. He did not hesitate to show his appreciation of the Venetian

school—at that time in some disrepute because their manner of painting was different from the bad work of Guido and the rest of his kind. But he seems to have made no effort to correct the popular idea; probably because he was naturally modest.

Perhaps Sir Joshua's greatest work was putting new life into the traditions that existed. But he did not hesitate to set aside tradition, when occasion offered, although his imaginative pictures are his least successful ones.

His pictures of children are his happiest efforts. In the picture before us he has painted the face of Frances Gordon in five different positions, going back to the Italian idea of a cherub to cloak this fact. By doing this he has made a picture of what in the hands of most painters would be but five different studies of one head.

This picture rests today in the National Gallery at London, along with "The Age of Innocence" and other important pictures by Reynolds. This group of pretty faces—all of one child—has always been a popular and well beloved picture.



THE TARGET, BY BOUCHER

HOW prettily Boucher (boo'-shay) has expressed his thought in this picture! It might almost serve as a valentine for some charming lady. Certainly some one's heart has been pierced—witness the target. Was it the artist's, or was he designing this touching idea for another? The work of Boucher is often criticized for

its shallowness. This is unfair, because his work is a reflection of his time, and is of the sort that the time demanded.

The life of the French court of Louis XV., in which Boucher lived and for which the greater part of his work was done, was hardly the place to look for seriousness. One round of gaiety followed another. Louis tried to draw all the nobles from their country houses to his court in order that the life of the court might seem more brilliant. These nobles, living at court, took but little interest in the happenings at home or in the laborers from whose work the revenue of these lands was derived. About all they cared for was the amounts which their overseers were able to wring from the peasantry, and this the nobles squandered in gay dissipation.

A spirit of unreality pervaded the court life. The artist painting the likeness of a nobleman with large estates would depict him as a shepherd piping to a nymph. Love-making came to be considered the chief end of shepherds in the popular conception of these couriers. No lady of fashion would think of having her portrait painted unless she appeared as Flora, or Diana, or as Venus attended by Cupid. Watteau of the previous generation of

artists had led the way; now Fragonard and Boucher followed his leading.

This is just the sort of thing the dissolute court of Louis XV. desired. And it must be admitted that these rouged and painted beauties, these powdered and bewigged shepherds and shepherdesses, do not fail to make a superb effect when seen in the exquisite settings which the luxurious furnishings of that time gave them. And with all their lack of intellectual depth, it must not be thought that their execution was faulty.

It was excellent; good in color, good in composition, good in drawing.

In this picture we find a further development of the cherub idea, or rather another development, which goes back to the Greeks. For these are cupids, rather than cherubs. In Byzantine art the cherubs are found merely as heads surrounded by wings. Later in the art of Italy we find the child's body added. In the Flemish art of Rubens and his school we find the cherub idea almost obliterated by the child idea. Here Boucher has gone to the Greek god of love, Eros, and the tiny figures that he and the other painters of this period used in their pictures are little loves, quite removed from the angel idea.

the dress

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CLASSICS

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